

Preface

Research focusing on technical communication is crucial to advancing our understanding and knowledge and proactively prepare future-oriented development. In response to this need, tekomp - Europe's largest professional association for technical communication - organizes since 2012 the European Academic Colloquium on Technical Communication to encourage the exchange of knowledge and ideas among members of the European scientific community who are teaching and doing research that is focused on technical communication or related fields, such as translation, multilingual communication, localization, terminology, information management.

The second "European Academic Colloquium on Technical Communication" was held in the Rhein-Main Hallen in Wiesbaden, Germany on 5 November 2013. The topic of the event was "Scientific Perspectives on Technical Communication – What is the scientific approach to Technical Communication of the participating scholars across Europe?" While the focus was mainly on sharing scientific knowledge and reporting on (ongoing) research projects, scholars were also invited to exchange ideas on the design of curricula and study programs, the mobility of scholars and students, and co-operation between universities.

This collection of papers, the second volume of the "Proceedings of the European Academic Colloquium on Technical Communication", is a reflection of the colloquium's broad scope, the current academic challenges and developments in the area of technical communication in Europe and the range of interests among the contributors. This year's volume contains six papers. These include: three research reports, a research review, a field report, and the description of a certification programme that was developed in a EU-funded project.

In her contribution, Yvonne Cleary examines the technical communication field in Ireland from a practitioners' perspective. Despite the fact that many software and telecommunication companies are located in Ireland, technical communication is a rapidly changing but largely unknown field of work in the country. The author explores the nature of the occupation focussing on perceptions of education & training, practice, status, and community structures against the background of symbolic interactionism and communities of practice theories. Through a comprehensive national survey of and interviews & online focus group discussions with Irish technical communication practitioners, Yvonne Cleary tests the hypothesis whether the practitioners operate as members of a community of practice and are moving towards professionalization. The findings indicate that Irish technical communicators exhibit many traits of a community of practice. However, several barriers viz. challenges still remain, such as enhancing the external visibility of the job role as well as elevating the academic status.

Cristian Dragomirescu, Voichita Ghenghea and Elisabeth Lazarou approach technical documentation from the angle of academic training and the foreign language curriculum design. Within the German Department of the Faculty of Engineering in Foreign Languages at the University of Politehnica of Bucharest two new courses in technical communication as well as content and language integrated learning (CLIL) and interdisciplinary student project work were introduced to meet the needs of the changing profile of the engineer in the global labour market and to guarantee the quality of information and knowledge transfer both to lay persons and among subject matter experts. By means of illustration, the authors analyse two engineering bachelor theses on the quality of

instruction manuals and on the role of specialist documentation for designing for safety in medical appliances, respectively.

Given that screen shots are an important means of visualization in software documentation, Michael Meng follows up these long discussed questions: How helpful are screen shots? Do screen shots support effective learning and task execution? Do they increase reading motivation? Should they be used by technical communicators despite the additional costs, and when and how should they preferably be used? To answer these questions, the author reviews applied language studies on screen shot effects and provides insights into their practical implications. Taking into account variations both with respect to screen shot functions and screen shot design, the review of the empirical evidence revealed that although screen shots apparently make software documentation more effective, they seem to have positive effects only in sufficient complex tasks and learning domains.

Frieda Steurs focuses on the information challenge in an increasingly international world. She states the importance of effective multilingual communication and the key role therein of unambiguous terminology as an essential knowledge provider in specialized, technical and scientific communication. In order to deal with terminology issues in communication, translation and localization projects and to simplify the information flow both internally and externally, companies need to invest in a central knowledge repository and a good terminology management system. According to Frieda Steurs an excellent way to raise companies' awareness of terminology and terminology management and to train employees in solving terminology-related problems is the ECQA Terminology Manager Basic. Within the framework of the ECQA (European Certification and Qualification Association) certified trainings are offered in different formats, i.e. as classroom trainings, in-house trainings, and e-learning courses for several languages, and in the future also for several levels and subdomains.

Tytti Suojanen provides a classification of motivation strategies and their use in instructional texts. She reports on the results of her ongoing PhD. research, in which she examines the wide variety of motivation strategies in a diachronic corpus of Finnish user instructions for household appliances between 1945 and 1995. Building on Keller's (1983) *ARCS Model of Motivational Design* as well as on the research by Loorbach (2013) and Loorbach et al. (2006, 2007, 2009), she zooms in on two types of motivation strategies: motivation strategies that appeal to the *confidence* of the user on the one hand, and motivation strategies that are based on the *relevance* that a given instruction has for the user's personal needs or goals e.g. in terms of rewards and threats, on the other hand.

Finally, Sylvia Fischer claims that successful communication and product operation are dependent on a comprehensible product design and language. She therefore argues in favour of a comprehensible design analysis on the basis of the *Offenbach Theory of Product Language*, since a design analysis provides technical writers with valuable information on design deficiencies and dysfunctional product language that has to be compensated for by the manual. A design analysis becomes even more important with new to be launched products that are meant for use by lay persons in the public sector and that are not accompanied by an instruction manual.

We conclude this preface by thanking the many people who have contributed time and energy to this European colloquium, and made possible the conference and the proceedings. We hope that you enjoy reading the content of this volume. We also hope that this volume will contribute to stimulate

and broaden the research on technical communication and further exchange of scientific ideas among the European research community.

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